

Carter Booth, *Chair*
Daniel Miller, *First Vice Chair*
Susan Kent, *Second Vice Chair*
Bob Gormley, *District Manager*



Antony Wong, *Treasurer*
Valerie De La Rosa, *Secretary*
Amy Brenna, *Assistant Secretary*

COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 2, MANHATTAN

3 WASHINGTON SQUARE VILLAGE

NEW YORK, NY 10012-1899

www.cb2manhattan.org

P: 212-979-2272 F: 212-254-5102 E: info@cb2manhattan.org

Greenwich Village □ Little Italy □ SoHo □ NoHo □ Hudson Square □ Chinatown □ Gansevoort Market

July 29, 2020

Steven Banks
Department of Social Services Commissioner
150 Greenwich Street
New York, NY 10007

Eric Rosenbaum
Project Renewal President & CEO
200 Varick Street, 9th Floor
New York, NY 10014

Dear Commissioner Banks and President Rosenbaum:

At its Full Board meeting July 23, 2020, Community Board #2, adopted the following resolution:

IN SUPPORT OF PROJECT RENEWAL'S PLANS FOR A HOMELESS SHELTER FOR WOMEN AT 27 WEST 11TH STREET:

WHEREAS:

PRESENTATION AND ATTENDANCE:

1. Plans for the shelter were presented by Leilani Irvin, the Manhattan Borough Director of the NYC Department of Social Services, as well as by the following staff members of Project Renewal: Eric Rosenbaum, CEO; Jody Rudin, EVP and COO; Kaedon Grinnell, VP of Programs; and Charles Mulham, Director of Security; and
2. An additional 73 members of the public registered to attend the meeting; and

RELEVANT INFORMATION ON HOMELESSNESS IN NYC:

3. NYC's homeless population of approximately 60,000 includes families with children, adult families, and single adults; and
4. Homeless New Yorkers have a legal right to shelter, which creates pressure for the City to continually open additional shelters. While large shelters (the law allows each a maximum of 200 beds) are the most cost-effective, some social service providers feel that these do not yield the best results for their residents; and
5. The Mayor's Office of NYC has called for minimizing reliance on the 360 hotels and cluster unit settings that have been employed as homeless shelters, deeming these to be of high cost, inferior quality,

and segregated within the city. Instead, his “Turning the Tide”¹ plan promises to create 90 newly purposed shelters operated by top-notch providers. The cluster shelters have already been converted to affordable housing units for former DHS shelter clients who resided in them; and

6. Adult women seeking shelter in NYC enter the system through one of two intake sites² for assessment to determine the program type that best serves their needs. Some sites, such as the proposed site at 27 West 11th Street, are specifically for women who either already have jobs or who have no significant barriers to employment. However, employment assistance is not limited to this type of program. Case management services provide employment assistance to clients in all program types throughout the shelter system, as well as mental health and substance abuse services. Physical disability is not a factor in determining employability, although it might determine placement to the extent that certain building sites are not ADA-accessible. As required by law, NYC provides shelter to anyone who requests it; and
7. NYC’s Department of Social Services identified the building at 27 West 11th Street as being suitable for adaptive reuse as a shelter, and asked Project Renewal to respond to its Request for Proposals (RFP) as an operator of the facility; and
8. Project Renewal’s decision to pursue the RFP was driven in part by its experience in workforce development and the opportunity to operate a small shelter of 90 beds with ample support services for its female residents; and
9. Project Renewal is a social services organization founded in 1967 with a mission “to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, homes, and jobs.” The organization provides housing to 3,900 homeless New Yorkers each year and delivers healthcare to more than 12,000 people; and
10. Project Renewal is in the process of finalizing a rental lease with the owner of the property. The landlord will advance the cost of the renovation and oversee the construction, following a design process in collaboration with DHS and Project Renewal to ensure that the building will meet programming objectives and regulatory standards; and
11. Project Renewal expects to enter into contract with NYC Department of Homeless Services, whose typical duration is of nine years and renewable; and

SITING A SHELTER AT 27 WEST 11TH STREET:

12. There are currently 273 shelter programs in NYC that span 647 buildings across all five boroughs. Manhattan has 80 shelters; 13 clusters; and 16 hotels for use as shelter.³
13. Community District 2 has no homeless shelters within its boundaries as of this writing, although plans are underway for a Safe Haven drop-in center on West 14th Street to be operated by Center for Urban Community Services (CUCS); and
14. This block of West 11th Street, between 5th and 6th Avenues, is primarily residential, with little ground-floor retail on the street. New School University owns a building at 66 West 12th Street that extends to West 11th Street; 55 West 11th Street has mixed residential and commercial use; and

RENOVATION OF 27 WEST 11TH STREET:

¹ More information on Turning the Tide is at <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/turning-the-tide-on-homelessness.pdf>

² These are the Franklin Shelter in the Bronx or the Help Women’s Center in Brooklyn

³ <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/turning-the-tide-on-homelessness.pdf>, p. 88

15. 27 West 11th Street, also known as The Larchmont, was built in 1889⁴ and a Certificate of Occupancy from 1955 lists it as “Mult. Dwell. – Single Room Occupancy”⁵; and
16. DSS and Project Renewal informed CB2 that a shelter for homeless women is an as-of-right use for The Larchmont, and that this plan will not require any variances and will therefore not undergo a Uniformed Land Use Review Process (ULURP), a process where CB2 input would be required; and
17. Project Renewal does not yet have control of the site and is in the process of finalizing a lease with the property owner does not yet have a contract with the City. We are told that the property owner has engaged an architect but has not yet hired a contractor for the renovation; and
18. The number of people permitted in a shelter is regulated by law according to “Callahan” rules.⁶ Under these guidelines, the maximum occupancy at 27 West 11th Street will be 90 residents. Operating at maximum occupancy allows for greater financial stability of the shelter’s operation; and

OPERATION OF THE SHELTER AT 27 WEST 11TH STREET:

19. The West 11th Street Women’s Shelter is expected to open in 2022 and will provide 90 beds for women who have been assessed by NYC Department of Homeless Services (DHS) as having no significant barriers to employment, although some may require ongoing supportive services, such as for mental health or substance abuse issues. These clients will either be already employed or will be seeking employment and transition to permanent housing. Priority will be given to women with roots within the district, such as jobs or a personal support network. On-site services at the Project Renewal shelter will include case management, counseling, occupational therapy, workforce development, and housing placement; and
20. Off-site services will include primary healthcare, health and mental health services, substance abuse treatment, vocational training, employment placement, GED instruction, conflict mediation, and legal services; and
21. A contracted security vendor will staff the shelter with unarmed, uniformed personnel. Security officers will be posted at the entrance of the building to control access and monitor security cameras. Security cameras installed throughout the building and grounds will allow staff to monitor compliance with house regulations and good neighbor policies in and around the facility. Residents at the shelter will not be permitted to receive guests; will not reside with children; and will adhere to a 10pm curfew except for cases when employment requires otherwise; and
22. Residents will be referred to the shelter by DHS. Upon arrival, case workers will conduct an initial meeting to determine a resident’s long-term goals and needs. Residents will formally agree to a code of conduct. They will share bedrooms and bathrooms; they will take meals in a communal dining room; and
23. Smoking will not be allowed within doors on the premises. Project Renewal commits to working with the community to consider the comparative advantages of an on-site exterior space for smoking rather than a requirement that smokers exit the building to smoke, which would increase the incidence of loitering on the sidewalk; and

⁴ <http://home2.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/GV.pdf>

⁵ <http://a810-bisweb.nyc.gov/bisweb/CofJobDocumentServlet>

⁶ Callahan v. Carey, 1979. <https://www.escri-net.org/caselaw/2006/callahan-v-carey-no-79-42582-sup-ct-ny-county-cot-18-1979>

24. As required by the City, Project Renewal will form a Community Advisory Board (CAB) that will meet quarterly and will include representatives of local elected officials and the 6th Precinct of NYPD as well as members of the community. In addition, Project Renewal promises to provide a contact for 24/7 responsiveness for any concerns that might arise, both before and during the start of operations of the shelter and the formation of the CAB; and
25. Project Renewal commits to further community engagement by working with local civic organizations to coordinate block beautification projects; and to provide food for neighborhood events (such as Halloween and Pride) through Project Renewal's social enterprise, City Beet Kitchen (perhaps seeking local sponsorships to defray costs); and
26. Six long-term tenants at 27 West 11th Street (only five of whom habitually reside in their apartments) have been notified of the plan to utilize the building as a shelter. The landlord, Shep Morgan, has received a certificate of no harassment from NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD). Each of the current tenants will be offered the opportunity to move temporarily within the building during the construction period, which is anticipated to last one year. The six units will be upgraded with kitchenettes and bathrooms and in some cases larger rooms. The tenants will be asked to consider being co-located in the same wing of the building as the shelter, but this will be optional for them; and

COMMUNITY INPUT:

27. Members of the public conveyed their remarks through participation in our meeting as well as through letters emailed to CB2. Neighbors in immediate proximity to the proposed shelter expressed both support and concern, while CB2 residents farther afield generally expressed enthusiastic support; and
28. Comments in support expressed eagerness at the opportunity to share in the City's efforts to address homelessness. Letters noted that "this area of downtown New York has been known for its humanitarian acts and views," that "CB2 contains some of the most affluent neighborhoods in the city," and that the proposed shelter hence offered "the chance for us to do our part" to help "traditionally marginalized, underrepresented, and under-resourced community members," and to play a role in "welcoming the individuals it will house"; and
29. Concerns raised by some neighbors living in immediate proximity to the proposed shelter addressed the unknown potential impacts on quality of life on what is currently a quiet residential street: mistrust of the property owner to oversee the construction responsibly; increased noise during construction; the impact of construction on adjacent properties that date to the 19th century; the lack of existing egress for fire and emergencies. There were also questions about the increased density that will be produced by housing 90 residents, plus staff, in a building that has recently been under-occupied; whether the shelter is likely to increase sidewalk loitering, noise, or disturbances; the level of impact resulting from cigarette smoking in the exterior space housed within the property, and whether it is better to require smokers to use the sidewalk instead; and
30. Project Renewal made clear that recent outreach to the community was only the beginning of what it promised would be a thorough and iterative process, with dialog and accommodation throughout the development of the shelter. Project Renewal and DSS committed to working closely with neighbors to address concerns collaboratively.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT COMMUNITY BOARD 2, MANHATTAN

1. Strongly supports Project Renewal's plan to operate a shelter at 27 West 11th St for homeless women with no significant barriers to employment; and
2. Recognizing that its district houses no shelters currently, welcomes the opportunity to share in the City's efforts to provide assistance to women in need; and

3. Looks forward to opportunities for engaging with shelter residents and helping them form bonds within our community; and
4. Expects DSS and Project Renewal to maintain, as promised, continued dialog with neighbors and to mitigate potential quality of life impacts from the shelter's construction and operation; and
5. Looks forward to frequent visits to CB2 by DSS and Project Renewal at every phase in the shelter's development.

Vote: Unanimous, with 43 Board Members in favor.

Please advise us of any decision or action taken in response to this resolution.

Sincerely,



Carter Booth, Chair
Community Board #2, Manhattan



Susanna Aaron, Chair
Social Services Committee
Community Board #2, Manhattan

CB/EM

c: Hon. Jerrold L. Nadler, Congressman
Hon. Brad Hoylman, NY State Senator
Hon. Deborah J. Glick, NY Assembly Member
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Corey Johnson, Council Speaker